

Public Safety Initiatives (Submitted by Scott Brodie, VIU)

1. Nanaimo has a disproportionately high unsheltered population compared to every other community in Canada ([Nanaimo PiT Count, 2023](#)). Additionally, Nanaimo has one of the highest ratios of unsheltered per capita of any community in Canada (Nanaimo PiT Count, 2023). Added to this, these data undercount the extent of this growing problem. Currently, one hundred temporary spaces by HEARTH are forthcoming, but this in no way will address the scope of the problem in Nanaimo. We need Housing First initiatives and other best practices to address and reduce this problem.
2. Nanaimo does not have a restorative justice program (aside from Connect, which is small in scope). Restorative Justice programs (like [Restorative Justice Cowichan](#)) can work in tandem with the CJS and offer a way of looking at harm/crime that seeks to address/balance the needs of everyone (victims, survivors, offenders, and communities). Programs involve finding ways for meaningful accountability and moving participants toward reparation, restoration, healing, and solving the underlying problems that give rise to harm/crime. This involves training, community justice forums, VOMs, and healing circles. I know some experts in the field, and have students who work at Cowichan Restorative Justice, who may be willing to help. These programs can be pervasive and effective in my experience.
3. Finally, I'll argue that Nanaimo has a serious image problem, which has also caused some misperceptions about crime rates and harm in Nanaimo. I'd like to advocate for a robust community clean-up and graffiti abatement program in tandem with initiatives to change the perception of Nanaimo. Nanaimo has had difficulty addressing eye sores, like the downtown pit, the Howard Johnson hotel, graffiti that surrounds VIU, and other issues. The initiative could revamp current graffiti enforcement and prevention measures including temporary exemptions and mitigation strategies for property owners who are repeated targets of graffiti/vandalism. Could also involve a graffiti sanctioned zone. There are opportunities to collaborate with external stakeholders on graffiti removal initiatives. For example, RJ programs (above) have had success with reparation programs to address graffiti/vandalism. Also, we need a communications strategy to raise public awareness on programs to beautify Nanaimo and change public perception. There are also solutions like temporary fencing to hide condemned buildings and construction sites.